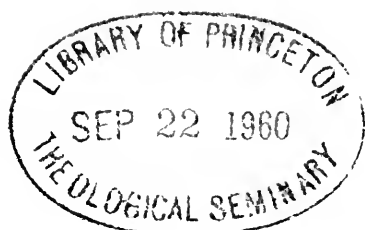


J. MacGregor

The Inspiration
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ITS NATURE AND EXTENT.

BY

THE REV. JAMES MACGREGOR,

Free High Church, Paisley,

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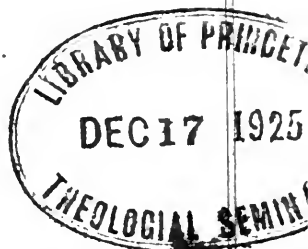
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THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

Of the verb to “inspire” the literal meaning is, to “breathe into” and fill with one’s breath. The ordinary meaning is, to fill and inform with the spirit of one’s mind. Thus a melody is said to be inspired by the musician, because it is not mere sound, but melodious sound, expressing his mind, his idea of the beautiful. Any true word of man is thus “given by inspiration” of the man, because it expresses his thought, or feeling, or desire, or will; because it is filled and informed by his mind or spirit:—it is the inspiration of the man that makes the word to be *his*. And if the word should be committed to writing, so as to give permanent written expression to his idea, his thought, emotion, aspiration, resolve, it still retains its character, of being inspired of him, and becomes a “scripture given by inspiration” of the man. So when a scripture is said to be *theopneust*, *God-inspired*, or “given by inspiration of God,” the meaning is, that the word is *God’s*, that it is filled and informed by *His* Spirit, that it expresses *His* mind, *His* thought, or feeling, or desire, or will; so that *He* speaks in the word, what the Scripture says is said *by Him*.

The question, therefore, of the *nature* of the inspiration of Scripture is this, Whose word is it? Whose mind does it express? Who speaks to us in the written word? Then, supposing the inspiration to be in its nature divine, there arises the question as to its *extent*:—*How far* is the Scripture thus inspired? Does

the divine inspiration extend to the whole of it, or only to a part of it? Some hold that the Scripture is inspired of God throughout, that not merely some part of it, but the whole of it, is the word of Jehovah: and their doctrine is known as the doctrine of *plenary* inspiration of God. Others, again, hold the doctrine of a *partial* divine inspiration: by which is meant, that not the whole of Scripture, but only some part of it, is the word of God, in the sense of expressing His mind, so that what is said in the word is said by Him. After some introductory remarks, I will discuss the subject of inspiration of Scripture with reference to the two questions, of its nature and of its extent.

The following rules must be observed from the outset:—

1. *We must distinguish Inspiration from Revelation.* A revelation is simply a communication of truth, or an instrument of communicating truth.* Thus, creation and providence constitute a natural revelation of God. And we can imagine a true revelation even of praeternatural facts and doctrines which is not inspired of God. If the Westminster Confession of Faith be an accurate statement of the christian system of revealed truth, it is a revelation of praeternatural facts and doctrines, in the sense of declaring the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” And if by some miracle God were to set on that Confession the seal of His authority, endorsing all its statements as true, then it would be, not merely a *confession* of the faith of some, but a binding *rule* of faith to all; for all men are bound to believe the truth which is clearly revealed, and sufficiently attested of God. But the circumstance of its thus being a revelation, and becoming a rule of faith, would not change its nature, as a merely human composition, a “scripture given by inspiration” merely of the Westminster divines. And without begging the question either of the nature or of the extent of Scriptural inspiration, we may assume for the sake of argument that the Scripture is

* “Revelation” is often synonymous with *praeternatural* revelation, specially the *scriptural* revelation of God, as distinguished from the “light of nature.” But for the purpose of the present discussion it is convenient to employ the term in its *generic* sense, to designate *all* communications of truth, whether by the works of God or by His word.

a true revelation of God, so as to constitute a binding rule of faith.

2. *We must deduce our doctrine of Biblical inspiration from the Bible statements on the subject.* To the seeing eye, the sun is shown by shining, by *being* the sun. So, to the mind which is duly prepared for apprehending it, the nature of Scripture inspiration is made known *in and by* the inspiration: if I be previously acquainted with the speaker, I know him in his word, though the word should not speak expressly of itself. But this internal evidence will not avail us for the present discussion. There is a real disagreement of opinions on the subject. You may *see* the Scripture to be divinely inspired, infallibly true because divine, as clearly as you see the sun when shining; and so you may be established in a faith most profoundly reasonable, by directly apprehending in the “lively oracles” the living God. But this will not suffice for the conviction of your neighbour who does not see as you do; for though you so far be a “seer” for yourself you are no prophet to him. You may tell him that what you see has been seen and confessed by the mass of God’s children in all ages and lands. But this, though it furnish a powerful *presumption* in favour of your doctrine, is no conclusive *demonstration* of its truth, sufficient for the conviction of your neighbour: he has no right to take the Church for his prophet: the rule *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* is of great value, but not for the purpose of *binding* men to believe. If for his conviction you would enter by “the door,”—the lawful way,—you must not thrust upon him your intuition, or the intuition of the Church: you must produce a relevant revelation of God,—pertinent and conclusive statements of that Scripture which you and he alike accept as your rule of faith, your common standard of appeal.

Now the Scripture does make certain statements regarding its own inspiration. And, as we have no other trustworthy information on the subject, it follows that, if we would find the truth, we must begin with ascertaining what the Scripture says on the subject: we must build our doctrine of inspiration on

the foundation of Scripture, with the materials furnished by Scripture. From "the light of nature," or from "the analogy of faith," we may, if we will, frame certain *conjectural hypotheses* to guide us in our scriptural investigation. Objections arising against the doctrine we arrive at may give us cause to reconsider our induction of Bible facts, and deduction of doctrine from these. But still, it is not on what our fancy may suggest, as a makeshift for evading real or imagined difficulties, but only on what the Scripture declares, that our doctrine of its inspiration must be founded. This is true even with reference to those subjects (such as the being, the natural attributes, and the moral government of God, and many events in the history of the earth and man), regarding which we derive some information from the light of nature. It is more obviously and emphatically true with reference to matters (*e.g.*, concerning the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Regeneration, &c.), of purely positive revelation, regarding which the Scripture is the only trustworthy source of information. With reference to these, we must begin with inquiring, What saith the Scripture? and frame our doctrine from the relevant Scripture statements, if we will honestly deal with the Bible as a real revelation of God, a rule of our religious faith and practice. Now to this latter class of subjects belongs the inspiration of Scripture. The Bible is our only source of trustworthy information regarding it. Of trustworthy information on this subject, unaided reason, from the nature of the case, can give us none. And therefore, in the study of the subject the only legitimate method is, to begin with Bible statements or facts in order to end with the Bible doctrine.

3. *To this method there can be no well-founded objection on the part of any one who seriously believes in the Bible as a real revelation of God.* For example, the lowest doctrine of any divine inspiration is the doctrine or theory of "inspiration of ideas." According to this lowest doctrine in its lowest form, though the words and sentences, the narratives and reasonings, of the Bible be not divine nor infallibly true, yet at least the constit-

uent doctrines of the Bible, its distinctive ideas, are infallibly true because divine. Well, even from this lowest form of that lowest doctrine will follow the necessity of the method I propose. If there be in the Bible such an "inspiration of ideas," it is in the Bible that we must seek the true idea of its inspiration. For this inspiration is a subject on which the Bible pronounces, and on which we have trustworthy information in the Bible alone. It is a subject whose vast and vital importance is acknowledged by all parties :—on the one hand, the advocates of that theory assure us that a certain current doctrine of inspiration binds the mass of orthodox Christians in a degrading and pernicious bondage of the letter; and on the other hand, the friends of this doctrine assure us that the theory which would fain supplant it is at the best but a half-way house to infidelity, if not in some cases a slippery incline towards it, or even a convenient cloak to disguise it. Thus both parties impressively bear witness to the vast and vital importance of the subject. And therefore, even from the theory of "inspiration of ideas" in the Bible immediately flows the practical inference,—It is to the Bible we must go for the true idea of its inspiration.

It is true that while other things of which the Bible speaks pertain exclusively to the *matter* of revelation, the thing revealed, inspiration inheres in the *form* of revelation, the mode or instrument of revealing. But inspiration pertains not exclusively to the form, but also to the matter. The word speaks not only of other matters, but also of itself; and it is therefore not only a *medium* of knowledge, but also an *object* of knowledge to all who believe it. And therefore, as in regard to those other matters, so in regard to the inspiration of the Bible, if we would find the truth, and our life in the truth, the Bible is the way by which we must go to seek it.

But, even by those who profess to receive the Bible as a real revelation, this method is far from being universally pursued. There are not a few professed theologians who speak and write profusely on inspiration, without appearing to be

aware that the Scripture speaks on the subject ; or who, if they deign to notice the Scripture statements on the subject at all, refer to them only for the purpose of explaining them away into little or nothing, so as to make them square with a doctrine they have drawn from the “copious store” of their own imagination, with the view of evading the real or imagined objections to another doctrine. This method of study, so presumptuous in itself, so insulting to the Spirit of truth, is not likely to lead the wrong-headed student to the truth : it is all but certain to land him in error. All Scripture doctrines are open to objections which we may be unable to answer, encumbered with difficulties which we may not be able to remove. So, for example, of the Scripture doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Word, the atonement by His death, the saving work of His Spirit. The Scripture doctrines on these subjects are encumbered with difficulties which no wit of man has been able to remove ; and they who have insisted upon the removal of the difficulties, before they will entertain and rest in the plain Bible statements on these subjects, have usually landed in the pit of Socinianism. So in the present case: he who will begin with objections and difficulties, and insist upon moulding his doctrine of inspiration upon these, is on the broad way to the opposite of the truth. But one objection must be disposed of here :—

4. *The Scripture testimony to its own inspiration is competent.* Some have objected, that in seeking our doctrine of inspiration in Scripture, we are guilty of the fallacy of reasoning in a circle, because *we take the word of the witness for the character of the witness.* But this objection is only one of those clever superficialities which tickle the ear without reaching the reason. In certain cases, I am bound to take the word of the witness for the character of the witness. If his *general credibility or trustworthiness* be sufficiently established, I am bound to believe him when he speaks of his own character, just as firmly as when he speaks of any other matter of fact within his knowledge or experience. If I know my friend to be a perfectly honest man, I am bound to believe him if he should come and tell me about

himself, that he has been sent to me with a message from the Queen. If I know that John the Baptist is a prophet, I am bound to believe what he says about himself, that he is not the Christ, but the forerunner. If I know that Paul is an apostle, I am bound to believe him when he tells me of himself, that he has received his gospel, not through the medium of other apostles, but by direct and immediate revelation from God. If I know that Jesus is the Son of God, I am bound to believe Him when He tells me of Himself, "The words which I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father which dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." And similarly, if I know that the Scripture is a real revelation of God, I am bound to believe what it says of its own inspiration, just as firmly as I am bound to believe what it says of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, or any other matter of purely positive revelation.

Now that the Bible is a real revelation of God, invested with His authority to rule my faith, must in the present inquiry be presupposed. If you be not prepared to go thus far, to accept as true the Bible statement on every important subject, especially on such subjects as the present, on which the Bible is our *only* source of information, you are not prepared to begin the study of the question of inspiration. You may, if you will, accompany us in the search, in order that your curiosity may be gratified by learning what is the Scripture doctrine on the subject. And on learning this, you may be delivered from some difficulties that have kept you from receiving the Bible as a revelation, difficulties arising from what you imagine to be its doctrine of inspiration. But at this stage, before you have received it as a divine revelation, so that in your estimation Scripture doctrine on such subjects shall be synonymous with revealed truth, it is idle for you to profess to search for truth on the isolated point of Scripture inspiration.* Before you can be prepared in good faith to search for the truth on

* *That the Bible is a real revelation of God, i.e. makes a communication of truth from Him, is shewn by the external and internal evidences of Christianity: how this communication is made, i.e. by whose inspiration, in whose words, must be learned from the Bible itself.*

these points of detail, you must be at rest on the general proposition, that the Bible with reference to all such matters is a real revelation of God, a trustworthy rule of faith—that the general credibility of the witness is established. But if in good faith you accept the Bible as a true revelation, a trustworthy guide with reference to praeternatural facts *in general*, so far as it speaks of them, you are bound in consistency to believe it if it should declare a praeternatural fact regarding its own inspiration in particular. And though you should not so accept the Bible, yet you can see the futility of the objection about the competency in the mouth of one who professes to accept it as a rule of faith. The objection in plain English means, that though God *should* have inspired the Bible, we have no right to believe Him when he tells us He has inspired it, He cannot possibly manage to tell us the truth so as to bind us to believe it. And therefore, to explain the nature of the objection is to expose its impious folly.

I.—NATURE OF THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

Here we have nothing to do with the question of the *canon*,—What are the books which constitute the Bible, the rule of our religious faith and practice? We have nothing to do with the question of the *text*,—What words and sentences constitute this, and that, and that other canonical book, as they originally came from the pen of the writer? The question now before us is not of *quantity*, but of *quality*. *Supposing* that this work is entitled to a place on the canon, that this sentence or paragraph is a veritable portion of the canonical book, entitled to the name of “Scripture,” or “Holy Scripture,” the question is, What is its quality? What is the nature of its inspiration? Who has inspired it? Who speaks in the Scripture?

Again, we have nothing to do with *the process* by which the Scripture was produced, but only with *the product*, the Scripture itself. The process is one thing, the product is another and entirely different thing. No sane man imagines that, in speaking of the process of agriculture, of ploughing, and sowing, and

harrowing, he is speaking of the product, discussing the quality and price of corn. Yet many have laboured under this hallucination with reference to the bread of our eternal life. Some theologians give elaborate delineations of what they imagine to have been *the process* in the mind of the human writers of the Bible, tell us about *elevation, superintendence, suggestion, &c.*, under the impression that they are somehow speaking to the question of the *product*, the Scripture or writing which we have in our hands. Now the Bible often speaks of the product, the Scripture itself, without saying a word about the process from which it has resulted. The nature of the process has nothing to do with the practical purpose for which the Scripture is given. For that purpose, the only thing of real importance is the quality of the product. And the question now before us is not, What is the nature of the process by which the Scripture was produced? but, What is the quality of the product, the nature of the inspiration of *the Scripture* now before us? *Who* is it that speaks in it now, *no matter how he came* to speak in it? And by distinguishing things that differ, we shall from the outset be disencumbered of much pernicious rubbish, enabled at once to proceed to the *real* question before us, by pushing aside all the "perilous stuff" about *elevation, suggestion, superintendence, &c.*

As to the real question, of the quality of *Scripture*, the Bible says, "Scripture is given by inspiration of *God*," it is *theopneust, divinely* inspired; He who speaks in it is God.* (2 Tim. iii. 16.) Timothy is assailed with temptation to unbelief or wavering

**How* an author speaks in his work, is to be learned from the work itself. In the *Paradise Lost*, Milton intimates his mind dramatically, through the action and words of fictitious characters. So the Saviour reveals His mind in the parable of the Prodigal Son. So, it has been thought, does the prophetic Spirit in the book of Job. And certainly, God often expresses His mind through the words and actions of *real* human characters. Thus in the book of Ecclesiastes, which may be described as the "confessions of an inquiring spirit," He reveals to us, 1. a real human experience, 2. the great want of man, and 3. (by implication or expressly), the provision for that want in God.

belief by the cloudy and baseless speculations of men. But, the Apostle reminds him, he has a rock on which his faith may repose securely and immoveably, the body of the "Holy Scriptures," which are able to make him wise unto salvation. And now, in amplification of that statement, the Apostle goes on to say, "All *Scripture, as theopneust, is profitable for doctrine,*" &c.; or "All *Scripture, being divinely inspired, is therefore profitable;*" or "All Scripture is given by inspiration of *God, and (so) is profitable.*" No matter which of these renderings you adopt, the meaning of the text remains the same.

The doctrine of this text is not peculiar to it. It is the uniform doctrine of Scripture in all its statements regarding its own inspiration. It invariably speaks of itself as being, not merely the word of man, but distinctively "*the word of God.*" It tells us that "no Scripture is of private interpretation," (has resulted from the mere private judgment of the writers), but that "holy men of old *spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" Consequently, it refers to itself in this style, "*Well spake the Holy Ghost*" by the mouth of the prophet. And on this ground, of its *divine* inspiration, it lays claim to the faith and obedience of the universe: "Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, *for the Lord hath spoken.*"

This doctrine is so plain, that a babe can receive it and act upon it, by receiving the words of Scripture, in faith and love, as the oracles of God. And it is so plainly revealed in Scripture, that it has been believed in all ages and lands by the great mass of those who have really received the Bible as the rule of their religious faith and practice. But, like every other important doctrine of Scripture, it has been exposed to continual assaults. Of these assaults, the most insidious and dangerous have assumed the form of misrepresentations. To some of the current misrepresentations I will now refer:—

1. The inspiration of Scripture has been confounded with the inspiration of *works of natural human genius*. In some minds the confusion arises from the fact, that to Scripture and works of natural genius has been given the same *name*, of

“inspired.” From this it has been concluded that they are of one *nature*: as if, because a hero is poetically described as a lion, we were to turn poetic truth into prosaic falsehood, and imagine that a hero and a lion, in natural history, are of the same species.

In other cases, the confusion originates in a confused recognition of the circumstance on which the community of name is founded; the circumstance, viz., common to the productions of natural genius and Holy Scripture, that they give us *new and surprising views* of God, the universe, and man, views which do not spontaneously present themselves to the average mind of the race. To designate this common quality, of novelty or originality of view, the same name of “inspired” is sometimes given to both. But we must beware of turning rhetoric into logic and metaphysics. The ancient Greeks sometimes employed one word—*mania*—to describe the disease of the madman and the inspiration of the prophet; because the *madman* as well as the prophet gives new and surprising views, which do not spontaneously present themselves to the average mind; he is carried, as we say, *out of his mind*, he is *beside himself*, and may well see much that men do not see on the beaten track. But though the madman and the prophet have this *mania* in common, which carries them both out of the beaten track, I am not aware that the Greeks ever imagined that, literally, the madman was a prophet, and the prophet a madman. This has been imagined by some tribes of savages; but never, so far as I know, by civilised men. And they among us who, because of the *rapture* common to the two, and the loose rhetorical application of the name “inspired” to both, confound the inspiration of the prophet with the “fine frenzy” of the poet, really do little to the credit of our Christian civilisation.

Once more, it is imagined that the inspiration of both is the same in its nature, because both are in *some* sense the work of the same God. But if sameness of origin be sufficient to establish identity of species, then in the same species with God-inspired Scripture we must include, not only the work of all human

genius, but for the same reason the “maundering” of idiots, the howling of demons, the cries of wild beasts:—for *these* are all in some sense the work of Him who “worketh all in all.” The confusion here springs from total misapprehension of the nature of the inspiration claimed by Scripture. The Scripture claims to be God’s word, *not* merely as being in some sense God’s work. If being God’s work could constitute a divine inspiration, the inspiration might be claimed by the inarticulate moanings of a babe in Christ with much higher reason than by the utterances of any merely natural genius. Between the loftiest utterance of a genius like Goethe and the lowliest prattlings of the babe there is a gulf as wide as between hell and heaven: the impure mind of the poet is “a cupola, lighted from beneath;” the babe’s pure spirit is a sunflower, lighted from above. But between even the loftiest utterance of ordinary Christian wisdom and the Scriptures of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, there is all the distance between earth and heaven. The difference is not merely *in degree* but *in species* or nature: it consists not in *what is said* but in *who says it*. Calvin, Augustine, Athanasius, say *what* is said in Scripture. But the things which they say are said merely by Calvin, Augustine, Athanasius; their writings bring me face to face only with men; in reading them I receive the mere word of men; the inspiration of *their* scriptures is merely human. But in reading “*the Scriptures*,” I am brought face to face with God; the things which they say are said *by Him*; and this is what they mean by saying that *their* inspiration is *divine*. No one ever dreamed of describing the works of the purest and loftiest merely human genius as “the Holy Scriptures,” “the word of God.” The writings of Moses, Isaiah, John, Paul, are so described, because they *are* indeed “the word of God.” It is not that which is common to them with “all the creatures and all their actions,” their being in some sense His *work*, but that which is peculiar to them, their being properly His *word*—it is this, and this alone, that constitutes the distinctive character, the *Divine* inspiration of “the Scriptures.”

2. A very common misrepresentation creeps about under the disguise of an objection to *inspiration of the letter*. The literal inspiration contemplated by the objection is an inspiration of the letter *apart from* the spirit, of the sound *without* the sense. To *this* (imagined) inspiration it is very reasonable to object. For no *such* inspiration ever existed, or can exist. The letter apart from the spirit is merely so much printer's ink; the sound without the sense is so much idle wind. The *real* inspiration is *the spirit in the letter*, the sense informing the sound, the mind expressed by the word. And therefore, to speak of an inspiration of the letter apart from the spirit, of the sound without the sense, *of the Bible as distinguished from its meaning*, is to be guilty of a gross contradiction in terms;—a contradiction as real, though not so obvious as if one had spoken of inspiration which is no inspiration, spirit apart from spirit, sense without sense. *the Bible as distinguished from the Bible*. Hence the objector has no difficulty in demolishing what he imagines to be our doctrine of literal inspiration.

But the drivelling nonsense which he has assailed is not our castle, but merely a windmill which his excited fancy has taken for a castle. The doctrine he has demolished has never been uttered as the doctrine of verbal or literal inspiration by any church, or by any respectable orthodox divine. For my own part, I regret the use of the expression “literal inspiration,” or “inspiration of the letter,” because it seems to countenance the imagination that in a scripture or writing there *can* be an inspiration which is *not* an inspiration of the letter. In a scripture or writing, *literal* inspiration is the only inspiration conceivable or possible. For it is only in the sound that the sense can have “a name;” it is only in the letter that the spirit can have “a local habitation;” if God really speak to us in the Bible, it must be in and by *the words* of the Bible. But though the expression “literal inspiration” may not be a very happy one, I thoroughly acquiesce in the sentiment which the expression is intended to convey, and recognise the necessity which has thrust the employment of some such expression on the church.

To go no farther back, some three hundred years ago, a certain Jesuit raised a tea-pot tempest in Popish France, by advocating what some among us regard as the bran-new theory of inspiration *of ideas merely, and not of words*. On the lips of some, this "theory" means merely the truism, *that it is not the printer's ink which is inspired*; that not the words without the meaning, but the meaning in the words, constitutes the revelation of God's mind in the Scriptures. They, therefore, mean no harm. What they mean to say, in a confused nonsensical way, is what is plainly said in the common-place old English maxim—"The *meaning* of the Bible is the Bible." But on the lips and in the heart of others, the theory means, *that the Scripture is not, properly speaking, inspired of God at all*: that the Bible is not really His word, so that what it says is said by Him; but merely the word of men, of men who tell us, more or less correctly, in a word which is *merely* their own, what they have somehow learned from God. And it is in order to guard against *this* Jesuitical theory, this "snake in the grass," that orthodox theologians have adopted the expression, "literal inspiration," or "inspiration of the letter." Apart from the words, the leading ideas of the *Paradise Lost* may be found in any good table of contents. But (except, perhaps, the mathematician who asked, "What does this composition *prove*?"), no one would dream of confounding the inspiration of the table with the inspiration of the poem; or of saying that there is no specific difference between the table which is Miltonic merely in the *origin of its ideas*, and the poem which is Miltonic in its *authorship*. In reading the table, we listen merely to the unknown author of the table: in reading the poem, we listen to the poet himself. So the leading ideas or doctrines of the Bible may be found in any good system of Christian theology. But though the system may thus be true and divine, it by no means follows that it is "given by inspiration of God;" it conveys a divine revelation, but by merely human inspiration. Now the Jesuitical theory of inspiration of ideas and not of words reduces the Bible to the same level with any orthodox human system of divinity; acknowledges that it conveys a

divine revelation, but denies that it does so by a *real*, i.e., a verbal or literal, divine inspiration. The doctrine of verbal inspiration declares the fact, that besides conveying a revelation, teaching what is taught in any good human system, the Bible is distinguished from all merely human compositions by really being "the word of God."

3. and last. Our doctrine has been misrepresented as affirming a merely *mechanical* inspiration. We are stigmatised as maintaining that in the composition of the Bible, the human authors were as *mere dead things*, like so many senseless pens, in the hands of Omnipotence. And if our doctrine involve any such thing, it will be open to very grave objections. For, as we observe the manifest characters of the Bible writings, with their endless variety of matter and form, of subject and style, we are led towards the conclusion that in the composition of them their human authors were perfectly free, each writer freely speaking in his own manner, according to his peculiar character, attainments, circumstances, purpose. And in this conclusion we are permitted and required to rest by the authority of the Bible itself. It expressly informs us that the Scriptures throughout are the word of man, of Moses, David, Isaiah, Luke, Paul. If, then, our doctrine affirm or imply that the Scripture is not the word of man, that its human authors in the composition of it were as mere machines, and not freely acting according to their nature as rational, we shall be found guilty of contradicting the plain indications and express declarations of Scripture itself. But our doctrine neither says nor implies any such thing.

We do not so understand it. In affirming a real verbal inspiration of God, *we do not mean* to affirm a mechanical inspiration, or to deny that the Scripture is really the word of man. Individuals here and there may have employed unguarded expressions which do apparently imply what we are accused of. But such expressions do not represent the deliberate judgment of the advocates of a real divine inspiration of the word. Among its intelligent advocates, a common form

of statement has always been, that "every word of Scripture is the word of God, *and* every word of it is the word of man."

Our doctrine does not compel us to affirm a mechanical inspiration. For it directly pronounces not on the process in the mind of the human authors of Scripture, but only on the quality of the product. If, then, in the interest of our doctrine, any one choose to advocate *any* theory about the process (whether mechanical, dynamical, or whatever he may call it), his advocacy is so far purely gratuitous, utterly uncalled for.

Our doctrine forbids us to believe in a merely mechanical inspiration. It teaches that in the composition of the Bible *the human authors were the instruments of God*. Now God employs His instruments, not *against* the nature He has given them, but *according* to it. Dead things, according to their nature as dead, He wields by mechanical or chemical force. Irrational animals, such as the bears which avenged the insult to His prophet, He employs according to their nature as animal or brutal. Rational beings He employs according to *their* nature, as rational and free, and not mechanically, in violence to their nature. When, therefore, our doctrine teaches that the human writers of the Bible were the instruments of God, it necessitates the inference, that in the composition of it they acted freely and rationally, according to the nature which God has given to man.*

How he could employ them so as to produce through their instrumentality a word which is *His*, while they retained their personality and freedom, so that the word is *theirs*, I do not pre-

* The superscription on the cross is not given in precisely the same words by any two of the four Evangelists. But, 1. This does not hinder any one of the reports from being true. Four honest men may tell precisely the same story in four distinct sets of words: four faithful reporters may report the same speech (in its substance) in four distinct sets of terms. And 2. The variety in form, while shewing that the four witnesses are free and independent, does not hinder the four testimonies from being all alike inspired of God. For they may all be *true*:—they all agree on the question, *what* the superscription was, (in its substance;) and they do not profess to tell us what were the precise terms of it.

tend to explain. The attempts to fathom the mystery of inspiration have not been more successful than the attempts to fathom the mystery of all providence. All the rational creatures, in all their characteristic actions, while wielded as the instruments of His almighty will and sovereign pleasure, retain their personality, and are as free as the wind from which their rational spirit takes its name. And thus, in ordinary providence we are face to face with the same mystery, of God's sovereign efficiency in man's free agency, which confronts us in the divine inspiration of Scripture. When we have fathomed the mystery of ordinary providence, we may begin to look for an explanation of the mystery of an inspiration of God through man.

In the meantime, leaving "the secret things" to "the Lord our God," let us rest in "the revealed thing," *the plain Bible fact*, of a *divine* inspiration of Scripture, such that what the Bible says is said by Him. In receiving *this* fact, we do not forget the *other* fact, that the Bible is, throughout, the word of man, so that, in order to learn what it says, we must study it as we would study any other human composition—comparing one of its statements with another, and contemplating the whole in the light of the human author's purpose, character, and style. But we remember that the meaning we thus seek for is *the mind of God*, expressed through man in God's own word, for the salvation of our souls, by the regulation of our faith *in Him*, and of our practice of obedience *to Him*. And this is *the* peculiarity of Scripture.

II.—EXTENT OF THE DIVINE INSPIRATION.

We now have done with the theory of so-called inspiration of ideas: we suppose a real inspiration of the word. The question is, how far does this divine inspiration of the word extend? Is it plenary, or only partial; *i. e.* is the whole Bible, or only some part of it, properly the Word of God? The advocates of partial inspiration support their doctrine, not by express scripture statements on the subject, but mainly by objections to the doctrine of plenary inspiration. And I will introduce this second part of the discussion by noticing some of these objections.

1. "It is *antecedently improbable, unreasonable* to suppose, that the whole of Scripture is divinely inspired; because, for practical purposes a partial inspiration would suffice." Now, a partial inspiration would not suffice for what we believe to be one practical purpose of God, viz. :—to give us *a book entirely His own*. That a plenary inspiration is necessary for the practical purpose of "perfecting God's man, his thorough equipment for all good work," we shall see in the sequel. But, for the sake of argument, let us suppose that a partial inspiration would suffice for *one* practical purpose of the Bible, viz. :—the bare maintenance of the faith and life of the Church; that it would suffice barely for her being, though not amply for her well-being. Some things revealed in Scripture might have been ascertained by unaided reason; and others, though undiscoverable by nature, are comparatively unimportant. It is *conceivable* that the Scriptures should be inspired of God only so far as it reveals what is undiscoverable by nature, or what is of great importance to our faith and life. And the question is, Is it not reasonable to suppose, antecedently probable, that this conceivable case should be the actual? I answer, No.

Of antecedent probability in this matter, we can judge only from the analogy of what we antecedently know, of the character, purposes, or habit of God. And it is His habit to give His good gifts, not in stinted measure, barely sufficient for the maintenance of life, but with kingly liberality, in divine profusion, "exceeding abundantly more" than the creatures absolutely need. The world's material wealth and beauty are far more than its living peoples can make use of:—"Full many a gem," &c.—The waters of the sea are immeasurably more than is absolutely requisite for the life of its kingdom of fishes. The air of heaven is not doled out to us barely in the measure of what we need for breath. The sun pours floods of light where no eye is open to receive it. Again, who can say that, for the bare maintenance of man's bodily life the rational spirit must be diffused through the whole? And yet, even in the basest members, the merest excrescences on our vital system, the soul is in the body, as God

is in the universe, "all in the whole, and all in every part." Or, once more, let us look at that *other* "Word of God," the incarnate Word, remembering that community of God-given name is founded on community of nature. Is it merely through *some part* of His human nature and experience that we see the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is it not through *the whole* of it? "That *holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*" "They shall call his name *Emmanuel.*" "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*" On Him the Spirit was poured "*without measure.*" In Him there ever "*dwells the fulness of Godhead bodily.*" Consequently, "the words which He speaks, He speaks not of Himself; but the Father which dwelleth in Him, He doeth the works:" not only His person as Godman, but the Godman's words and works, all alike are of the God who fills Him with His unmeasured fulness. If then, you will be guided by analogy to antecedent probability, as to the inspiration of the written word, look at that word Incarnate. See Him as manifested on the Mount of Transfiguration, radiant with deity all over, filled through and through with God: and judge whether it is reasonable beforehand to suppose, that the Spirit which fills Him with that unmeasured fulness of glory, shall fill and inform only some indispensable part, some stinted modicum of that written word which bears His name, because it is His image.

2. "Some of the materials of the Bible are borrowed from mere human compositions: and so far the Scripture *is not*, in fact, inspired of God." That the materials of the Bible are partly derived from works now lost, such as the *Book of Jasher*, we learn from the Bible itself. One interesting section of one of the books of Scripture appears to have pre-existed in the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*. Some theologians have thought that the whole existing Pentateuch is an amalgam of two or more older documents now forgotten and lost; others, that our four existing Gospels are based on one original gospel, now lost and long forgotten.

Now *suppose* that there was one original Gospel on which the existing four are based, and that there were two or more older docu-

ments which have been amalgamated into the existing Pentateuch. *Admit* the notorious truth, that the Bible contains statements of fact or doctrine which have been collected from books now lost, as well as from the memories of men dead and buried long ago. All this does not in the least affect the question of inspiration : — *Who is the author of the Bible as we have it now?* The real or imagined lost books, though not destined to form part of the permanent canon of Scripture, (for, if they had, they would not have been lost), may, for aught that we can tell, have been themselves inspired of God. Or, though they should have been merely human compositions, the work in which they are employed as materials may be thoroughly divine. The present discourse is thoroughly mine, wholly “given by inspiration” of me, if only I speak in it, and express my mind through all its parts; though its ideas should all be borrowed from older books, though its sentences should all be borrowed from theologians, poets, or prophets, though every word of it should be taken from the dictionary, and all the syntax from the English Grammar. So, though God should have chosen to adopt some words and sentences of mere uninspired men, yet if he employ them *to express His mind*, so that *He* speaks to us in the Bible all through, He is the real author of every sentence of it, “all scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Though some of the materials of a new house should be taken from an old house which has been pulled down for the purpose, no one will imagine that the new house is not wholly the work of the architect and builder. And similarly the Bible may be the word of God, though merely human works should have been employed as materials in the composition of it. The supposition that some real or imagined human works were so employed, as merely so many old houses, from which God has selected some stones for the building of His temple, is in perfect harmony with our doctrine, that “from turret to foundation stone,” the temple is the Lord’s.

3. and last—“There are scripture passages on the face of them inconsistent with truth and morality ; and these shew that the Scripture *cannot* be *all* inspired of God.” That the true

and holy God cannot say anything untrue or immoral, is self-evident. If any scripture passage be *really* untrue or immoral, it cannot have been "given by His inspiration." Further, it must be admitted that there are scripture passages *apparently* inconsistent either with truth or morality. Their existence has been notorious to the Church in all ages of her history. Some of them are obvious to the most cursory reader of the Bible; and, from Celsus to Colenso, (who appears never to have read his Bible till after he was deacon, priest, and bishop,) have always formed part of the stock-in-trade of popular infidelity. The difficulties of this class have for the most part been always substantially the same. But as knowledge advances, through the civilization which the Bible has created, the widening circle of light will bring into view a widening circumference of darkness, and there will emerge new difficulties in reconciling the unchangeable Bible with the advancing knowledge attained by natural science and history. Thus, some hundreds of years ago, there came into view the apparent inconsistency of the Bible with astronomical truth; and some fifty or sixty years ago, the apparent disagreement of Moses with geological truth. Of such apparent inconsistencies of the Bible, either with itself, or with truth ascertained from the revelation of nature, the greater part disappear on close inspection. But some remain unexplained: some will probably remain unexplained to the end of time. As there never has been, so there probably never shall be an age of the Church's history on earth, in which she shall not find herself in this respect surrounded with stormy darkness, and compelled, in simple faith, to "cast anchor, and wait for the day." But in the meantime, the acknowledged and notorious existence of such difficulties need by no means drive her to make shipwreck of faith, by ceasing to believe that the Bible is wholly the Word of God.

"How then, do you dispose of the difficulties?" By beginning (at the beginning,) with the question—Do they suffice to subvert the *authority* of Scripture, its claim to be regarded as a true revelation of God, a binding rule of religious faith and

practice? If they do, then it is idle to discuss the question of the extent of divine inspiration, *i. e.*, to inquire *how far* Scripture is the Word of God, while it is uncertain whether it can be His word at all. But if the difficulties be not such as to subvert the authority of Scripture, as a veritable divine revelation, then we have no right, on account of the difficulties, to disbelieve what it may plainly say, for example, on the subject of its own inspiration. There *may* be difficulties, real and inexplicable, which do not at all affect my obligation to believe and live. There is probably no important practical truth or rule against which our ingenuity may not conjure up objections which we may be utterly unable to lay. In ordinary life we believe the truth, not because there are no difficulties in the way of believing it, nor because we are able to explain them out of the way, but because the evidence for the truth is so clear and full as to enable us to *surmount* the difficulties, to believe in spite of them. And the Bible bids us believe its doctrines, not because there are no difficulties in the way of belief, nor because we may remove them, but because its divinity and authority is attested by an overwhelming mass of evidence, abundantly sufficient to enable us to *surmount* the difficulties which we cannot remove.

So to believe is perfectly practicable. The child sees much in the words and actions of his parent which he cannot make to square with his dim, confused notions of truth and morality. Yet, unless he be very unfortunate in his parentage, he is able to go on believing in his parent with an implicit confidence, the image of that faith which rational creatures owe to the "Father in heaven." In a letter from my friend, I find a word or sentence which I cannot account for, which I cannot explain in consistency with what I believe to be his character. But this does not shake my confidence in his character, nor make me imagine that the letter is not wholly his. I feel as if some word or sentence had been *blotted* so as to be unreadable, and can wait until I see my friend, and receive the explanation of the mystery from him. Such is my position as a believer in plenary inspiration, in the face of acknowledged difficulties, of scripture passages

apparently inconsistent with truth or morality. If I cannot explain them away, I feel perfectly free to leave them, until God, the author of the Bible, may choose to furnish an explanation.

And now, from the troubled sea of human speculation, let us pass on to the quiet haven of Scripture itself: let us listen to the "lively oracles" of God. In Scripture we have sought the *idea* of inspiration, the truth as to its *nature*; and in scripture we must seek the truth as to its *extent*. No doubt, against our doctrine of plenary as distinguished from partial inspiration of the word, there is sometimes alleged the same objection which is alleged against the doctrine of real inspiration of the word as distinguished from the so-called "inspiration of ideas;"—the objection, viz., that Scripture testimony is here *incompetent*, that the word of the witness cannot be taken for the character of the witness. But we have already seen that this objection is foolish and impious. And in the mouth of an advocate of partial divine inspiration, it is moreover suicidal. If the testimony of Scripture be incompetent to establish a plenary inspiration, *because* it is the testimony of Scripture to itself; then, for the same reason, its testimony cannot establish a partial inspiration, for this, too, is the testimony of Scripture to itself. If God, by His word, cannot possibly manage to tell us so as to bind us to believe, that "*all* Scripture is given" by His inspiration; neither can He manage conclusively to tell us that *any* scripture is given by His inspiration. The objection in truth tells only against the *reality* of a divine inspiration, or the possibility of conclusively *declaring* it to us as a fact.

"*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God." This appears to be sufficiently plain, in favour of a plenary, and not merely a partial, divine inspiration of the word. "But," you say, "this text does not really pronounce on the *extent* of divine inspiration at all, but only on the *profitableness* of what is divinely inspired." If it be so, why does not the Apostle say so? Why does he not say, "If you happen, anywhere or anyhow, to meet a divinely-inspired scripture, you will find it profitable, it will help you in this strait?" Because he does not mean any such weak and

watery platitude. In order that Timothy, a "man of God," may be thoroughly furnished for every good work, especially may be armed against temptations to unbelief or wavering belief, the Apostle has called his attention to "the Holy Scriptures," the well-known canonical books of the Old Testament. And with reference to *these*, he says, *they* will help you in this strait, for *they all through*, "all Scripture," everything of the nature of "Holy Scripture," everything entitled to a place on the canon, "is given by inspiration of God."

"But the Scriptures in Timothy's hands were only those of the *Old Testament*: therefore, the text does not pronounce on the inspiration of the *New Testament Scriptures*." In the just estimation of Christians, the *New Testament Scriptures* stand at least as high as the *Old*. And therefore the text which proves the plenary inspiration of the *Old*, will, in the just estimation of Christians, at least suffice to prove the plenary inspiration of the *New*. Again, though the *Old Testament Scriptures* be what the Apostle has immediately in view, he does not speak of them exclusively. He does not say "*All the Old Testament Scriptures*," but "*all Scripture*," every Scripture *as such*, everything entitled to that hallowed name, everything which constitutes a part of the canonical rule of religious faith and practice, alike possesses the quality of divine inspiration. Now the *New Testament Scriptures* are as fully entitled to a place in the canon, as truly a part of the rule of faith, as the *Old*.* And therefore the *New Testament Scriptures* are proved *by this text* to be wholly inspired of God.

"But the text may mean, not '*all Scripture*,' but '*Scripture as a whole*,'—leaving room for unlimited exceptions in detail." Again I answer, if this be what the Apostle means, why does he not say so? If he had meant to say so, he could have said in Greek just as easily as we can say in English, not "*all Scripture*," but "*Scripture as a whole*"—leaving room for unlimited

* The Saviour's promises of the Holy Ghost as "the spirit of truth," which some advocates of plenary inspiration regard as their stronghold, can refer to no scripture but the *New Testament*. How the canon of the *New Testament* is settled, is not here the question.

exceptions in detail. But he does not say this, because to have said this, instead of what he does say, would have been very little to the purpose for which he now speaks to young Timothy, the “man of God.” Timothy is established in the faith, by knowing and feeling that his faith is resting *on a rock*—and not merely on some possible rock amid a wilderness of sinking sand. To have said it would have been very wide of the Apostle’s habitual manner of speaking and thinking of the Bible: we never find him, while resting on *some* Scripture as the word of God, refusing to rest on others as being the mere word of man. It would have been in opposition to the concurrent testimony to itself of the Bible all through, of the whole series of prophets and apostles, with the Saviour at their head. *In speaking of itself as divinely inspired, the Bible never makes any exception,* never hints that any one part of it is less truly or fully inspired of God than another.* No matter what may have been the subject of their discourse, “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Be the matter revealed great or small, obscure or clear, mysterious or discoverable by reason, the word which reveals it is always “the word of God.” The Saviour and His Apostles know nothing of a word that is not God’s, a particle of Scripture not given by His inspiration. To the Bible they always appeal, on whatever subject it may speak, as an authority unquestioned and unquestionable. Whether the thing spoken of be important or not, mysterious or not, its utterances to them are all alike the oracles of the Omniscient and Infallible. The hypothesis or guess of a partial inspiration, whatever plausibilities it may have in its favour, has upon it this brand of condemnation and reprobation, that it is thoroughly unscriptural. Whatever reason the Bible gives us to believe that any one part of Scripture is divinely inspired, it gives us the same reason to believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture throughout.

* In 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12, 25, the distinction marked by Paul is between a precept which had been delivered by “the Lord” in the flesh, and a precept delivered for the first time by an (inspired) apostle.

To illustrate still further the truth and value of the doctrine of a plenary as distinguished from a partial inspiration, I will now, in conclusion, refer to the practical *end and effect* of Scripture as divinely inspired—"that the man of God may be perfect," in the sense of being "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This perfection of adaptation to work, combining the ardour of a youth with the disciplined valour of a veteran, is attained through the discipline of "reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." And the discipline is instrumentally bestowed by "*doctrine*," truth taught, or the teaching of truth. The place of the "*doctrine*" is therefore fundamental. And of any doctrine, the effect depends on these two things, 1. *What* is taught? and 2. *Who* is the teacher?

1. The effect of a doctrine depends on *its matter*, what is taught, the notions and impressions conveyed to the mind of the disciple. Now on the face of the Bible it plainly appears, that the substance, the heart and core of all its teaching is the "*doctrine of grace*," the "*mystery of the kingdom of God*," of salvation by the free redeeming love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This doctrine the Bible conveys in "*divers manners*," corresponding to the "*sundry times*" in the history of Biblical revelation. Thus, in the apostolical speeches and epistles, it gives us a dogmatic and polemic theology; in the evangelical narratives, a heroic theology; a typical and prophetic theology in "*the law and the prophets*;" an experimental theology in "*the Psalms*"—the biographies, and prayers, and songs of the Bible saints; and a historical theology all through, from the beginning of the Bible to its end.

Now that doctrine of grace, it is evident, is in its nature a "*mystery*," not ascertainable by the light of nature: for the knowledge of it we are entirely dependent on positive revelation. It is logically distinct from the matters of fact, in human history and experience, with which in the Biblical revelation it is blended. But suppose that we resolve to receive the properly *theological* statements of Scripture as the word of God, but to regard its statements of fact in human history as the mere word

of man. We shall find ourselves falling into the blunder and crime of attempting to sunder what God has indissolubly joined. "The word was *made flesh*," in order to dwell among us. The theological statements are blended with the historical as intimately as the soul is blended with the body. The two classes of statement are "one and indivisible," made by one witness, uttered by one tongue, filled and informed by one living spirit. If we receive the theological statements as the word of God, we are at least as strongly bound to receive the historical statements as His word: if we be not bound to receive the historical as His word, we are at least as feebly bound to receive the theological. So says the word Himself: "If I have told you *earthly* things (ascertainable by unaided reason), and ye believe not; how shall ye believe, if I tell you *heavenly* things (of purely positive revelation)?" This anticipation, of Him who "knew what is in man," has been verified by a painful experience. The unreliable believer, to whom the Lord will "not commit Himself," is far less likely to believe the saving doctrine of grace revealed in the Bible than to believe the facts of human history recorded in it. Loose views of inspiration, though they are often associated with scepticism in regard to the natural facts, are far more frequently associated with disbelief of the supranatural doctrines. And this disbelief, which is often the *cause*, is often the *effect* and the punishment, of not receiving "all Scripture" as "given by inspiration of God." You resolve to have a "word" which is *not* "made flesh." You will receive the "heavenly things" of the Bible as the gift of God, but not the "earthly things." In order to get at the soul of supranatural doctrines, you will destroy the body of natural facts praeternaturally revealed. But this blended faith and unbelief, with reference to the same indivisible word, is a psychological impossibility. In this case, the soul can remain to you only *in* the body. When you have destroyed the body, ceased to regard the historical statements as God's word, you are made an infidel in the process; you have destroyed your faith, the life-giving spirit of truth has fled from the destroyer.

But, through its body of facts, the Bible teaches us not only "the doctrine of grace;" the inspiring Spirit is given to guide its human authors to "*all truth*." Its believing readers have an "unction of the Holy One" that they may "know *all things*." It gives us a view, not only of God as the Saviour, but also of the church of saved men, her origin, constitution, history, and destiny; and, in connection with the Redeemer and His Church, a view of the character, history, and destiny, of the whole race of men, with the world they inhabit, and a still wider view, of the whole rational creation,—the whole created universe. Humboldt's *Kosmos* receives this name, because it is a work in which Humboldt gives us his view of the system of the world. The Bible might be named, from its contents, *Jehovah's Kosmos*. For it avowedly gives us a complete view of the universe, of universal creation and providence under God, as seen in connection with the Redeemer, the central person in the system, and with the central fact in its history, the redemption of lost men.

That general view of the universe is far from unimportant for the practical purposes of perfecting God's man. The lost man is saved by the "doctrine of grace." But "the man of God" is perfected by "*all truth*," showing him "*all things*," as they are in Christ, so that he may see Christ as He is "*in all*." Here we may take a lesson from Plato and the Platonists—*without saying, Fas est et ab hoste doceri*. In their estimation, the natural facts, things seen and temporal, "*ever becoming, never being*," are but the passing shadows of the one thing unseen and eternal; evanescent symbols, through which we may "*behold as in a glass*" that imperishable *idea* or archetype of all things which eternally exists in the mind of the Supreme. That archetypal idea is *the truth*, which feeds our souls, bringing us into personal communion with the fountain of being and thought, and so making us partakers of the divine nature. This Platonic theory is Bible fact. The things which are seen *are* temporal and evanescent; the unseen realities alone are eternal. "*All flesh is grass, and its goodliness as the flower of the field . . . the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand*

for ever ;” and consequently, he who receives the word, so as to “do the will of God, shall endure for ever.” This word is the food of our everlasting life, because it is the instrument of filling our minds with the mind of the everlasting God, causing Him to dwell in us in the light of His glory, and so transforming us into the image of His glory. It communicates to us *God’s own idea of the universe as a whole*, the idea which imperishably underlies the perishable world, immoveably seated in the bosom of Him in whom “we live, and move, and have our being.” If, then, we would be perfected, apprehending that for which we are apprehended, we must not confine ourselves to the Bible “doctrine of grace,” nor rest satisfied with seeing Christ on earth and on the cross : we must mount up along with Him to the throne, and from that view-point, see Him in all things, and all things in Him, as revealed through His word, the express idea of the everlasting God.

Now observe how this bears on the question of the extent of inspiration. You say that a plenary inspiration is useless or needless, because many of the Bible statements concern mere matters of natural fact, which you could have discovered for yourself. You could, for example, have discovered for yourself the facts which the Bible reveals about the course of creation, the flood, the history of Israel, the four ancient empires, the ten modern kingdoms. That is, you could have quarried for yourself such *stones* as these. But could you have set them in *their places in the temple* of the Lord? Could you have ascertained for yourself, and set them and kept them in, the places which they occupy in the just estimation of God, so as to form for yourself the true divine idea, and feed your soul with God’s own idea of the universe? How do we know that we have them in their right place in the temple, that when we look on them we see them as they are seen by Him, that as we read the Book His own idea of “all things” is being imprinted on our minds? Because the Book is *wholly* His : “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*” By this inspiration of *all* Scripture, a new significance and power are communicated to the veriest trifles,

the "jots and tittles" of the word. Mere men might have spoken of the "nine-and-twenty knives" brought from Babylon, the "cloak left at Troas," the sparrow's fall,—as a babe may handle some of the materials of a house. But the babe cannot set the materials in their due place in the building: this can be done only by the architect, *who knows the plan of the building as a whole*, and who, it may be, employs an unconscious babe as his instrument. And mere men could not have set those things which we call insignificant in their due place in the Bible, so as to express God's idea of the universe, an idea of which *they* were unconscious, unless they had been moved and guided as the instruments of Him whose mind they express.

And hence, generally, the folly of talking of an Inspiration of Scripture as a whole, which does not extend to all its parts. It would be much less foolish to talk of a plan of a building as a whole, which does not include the parts of the building. Every stone of the building must be laid with reference to *some* plan of the whole, either in the mind of the master or in the mind of the workman: he who lays a stone without reference to some plan, is contributing, not to a building, but to a mere heap. And if the workmen be unconscious of the plan, all their movements must be guided, every stroke of their work must be inspired, by the architect who produce the plan. Now the workmen who built the Bible temple were for the most part unconscious of its plan. Even with reference to the grand outline, "salvation," the prophets had to "enquire" and "search diligently, what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." No human writer of the Bible, it may be presumed, was fully possessed with the Bible idea of the universe, or aware of the place which his own particular Scripture was destined to fill in the rising temple of the word. And now, therefore, that completed temple, reared by so many unconscious workmen through so many ages, in the majestic unity of its endlessly beautiful variety, bears on the face of it the evidence of being *all* the creation of one inspiring mind.

2. The effect of a doctrine also depends on *its author*, who it is that teaches. And the end and effect of Scripture is achieved, because in Scripture *He who teaches everything is God*. 1. This plenary inspiration instrumentally secures a plenitude of *real belief*. If we had somehow got the view which the Bible gives us of God, the universe, and man, without certainly knowing that it is correct, the contemplation of it might produce *some* good effect on our lives, as men's outward lives are affected, their manners are softened, by the beautiful and true ideas of the poets. But in order to *saving* spiritual effects, the perfecting of God's man, we must not merely gaze upon the view, as we study a poem or picture, the work of imagination; we must *realize* it, we must receive the things set before us in their reality, we must know them, and rest in them, and feast on them as true and divine. This *realization* of the divine idea is what was so ardently longed for by the true heart of Socrates the wise: his conscious failure to attain it was the great grief of his life; and the dim hope of attaining it beyond the grave was his consolation in death. Now, as we have seen, the things set before us in Scripture are such in their nature, that we can be sufficiently assured of their reality by no teacher but God.

Thus, the whole "doctrine of grace" is in its nature a "mystery" which no mortal could have discerned, which none could have shewn us but the gracious God they reveal while He reveals them. We have seen that this doctrine is inseparably blended with the whole Bible system, even of natural facts; so that, unless we repose in the doctrine of grace as true and divine, we can repose no real faith in the Bible at all. Again, we have seen that, in connection with this doctrine of grace, the Bible is intended to give us God's own idea of the universe as a whole. And therefore, though we know that mere men might have discovered the natural facts, yet we can never feel sure that they have seen even these as God sees them, so that in reading the Scripture we are receiving and being moulded by His idea or express mind,—unless we know that *all* Scripture is given by His inspiration.

It is evident, therefore, that we can be thoroughly established in a real belief, a realizing view of what the Bible says, only by the conviction that all through the Bible that omniscient Spirit is our teacher. It is on this conviction that the faith of the Church has rested in all ages of her history. She has taken the Bible as the rule of her faith, because in and through the Bible she has recognised, as the *Ruler* of her faith, "the Holy Ghost speaking in the Word." She has always been more or less fully aware of the difficulties which exist as obstacles to faith. But as a child is enabled, by a childlike faith, to surmount many difficulties in the character, and actions, and words of his parent, so the Church has been enabled to *surmount* the difficulties, though she cannot remove them, yet to believe in spite of them, by the conviction that it is her heavenly Father who speaks to her in the word. . But if God be thus our *teacher*,

2. He is our *companion* throughout. The effect of a word depends upon him who speaks it, not only because it is an instrument of communicating his thought, but also because it is an instrument of our *communion with him*. It brings us into personal companionship with the speaker. It opens the door of our soul to admit him, and becomes the instrument of his Spirit's indwelling in ours. Whatever the matter of his communication may be, the word impresses *him* upon those who receive it as his. Thus the veriest babble, which no grown man would think of addressing to his equal, becomes the medium through which the parent enters the soul of his child, and leaves upon the little one the impress of all his own light and love. Thus, in selecting the instructors of our youth, and in choosing the authors who are to be companions of our solitary hours, we are careful, if we be wise, in seeing not only to their ability and acquirements, but also to their moral and spiritual character; because, while their formal instructions in history, poetry, science, are entering our memory, imagination, and intellect, their moral and spiritual character is silently impressing its image on our souls.

Now while the Bible, besides revealing natural facts, reveals the doctrine of grace, and God's own idea of the universe, in

all this, and above all this, the grand end of Scripture is to *reveal God himself*, in His glory of nature and of grace. And this it accomplishes, not only by speaking about Him, but also by being His word. Of its being His word, it is one blessed end and effect, to make us *know God* as our teacher throughout. And on this effect fundamentally depend all the saving effects of the Bible and its truths. Hence the vital importance of our having in all Scripture “the word of God,” a word in which we listen to Him. A Hebrew genealogy, of an obscure peasant family, long perished from the earth, is in itself a dry and uninteresting object of study; but it becomes an occasion of spiritual worship, of adoring faith and love, when I remember that in this genealogy the God of heaven stoops to my lowliness, and employs the language and records of men, in order to tell me of the human lineage of His Son. Thus, though the subject of the word be utterly insignificant in itself, yet the word as spoken is of vast importance, because *the speaker is God*. Though the things of which he speaks should be as mere dust, yet I am brought into communion with Him, disciplined to know, and love, and resemble my Teacher, if I tread the mere dust of Zion *in company with God*. Though what He tells me of the Redeemer and His Church, her origin, constitution, history, and destiny, had been insignificant too, yet I receive a salutary discipline, as I go over the ground of her battles, disasters, and triumphs, *in company with the God* who has loved her, and redeemed her. And though I should be naturally cold and careless with reference to the grand idea of the universe by itself, yet my heart may well burn within me as I read of it in the Bible; for *He* is speaking with me by the way, I am making the grand tour of the universe *in company with the God* who has made it and ever sustains it. Thus truly He is “with us alway, even to the end of the world;” with us, not only as our priest and king, to save, defend, and rule us, but also as our prophet to instruct us, all over the universe which the Bible discloses. And in all His offices, He is thus with us alway, because “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*”

And hence the vital importance of our *knowing and believing* the doctrine of plenary inspiration, so as always to *remember* that in reading or hearing the word we are in personal dealing and communion with Him. Hence the religious reverence with which true Christians regard the Scriptures, as “the lively oracles” of the most High. This reverence has brought upon them the reproach of bibliolatry or bible-worship; as if, in revering the divinity of Scripture, they were adoring it as a deity. But the unjust reproach to them is a eulogy on our doctrine. Our doctrine leads men to regard the Bible, though not with superstitious adoration, yet with religious veneration; and this one of its effects is an incidental evidence of its truth. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” That is not likely to be a true doctrine which allows men to make light of the oracles of God; and ours is all the more likely to be true, because it moves us to “tremble at His word.”

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